



April 17, 2015

Tom Wheeler, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

In recent months, a large number of constituents have contacted our offices with issues concerning the Federal Communications Commission's Lifeline Program. In the last two years, the Universal Service Administrative Company ("USAC") and the FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau ("Bureau") created a recertification process and amended it a year later, causing confusion amongst recipients. The most recent amendment (DA 14-303) allows eligible telecommunications carriers ("ETCs") to elect USAC to perform the Lifeline recertification process. Verizon opted for USAC to perform the recertification process. In November 2014, millions of Verizon's Lifeline subscribers received the recertification letter and form from USAC instead of Verizon.

Since January 2015, our offices noticed a pattern of those that had issues with Lifeline Program. A vast majority of them were seniors with limited English proficiency (LEP). They were longtime Lifeline recipients of Verizon's program and Verizon discontinued their Lifeline benefits without prior notice. Finally, when we inquired about recertification, the seniors said they never received any recertification forms from Verizon.

Thirty-seven percent of New York City's population is foreign born and over 48 percent of the population speaks a language other than English at home. Yet, the recertification form is only available in English. In addition, the recertification letter, which is separate from the form, is only available in English and Spanish. There is no indication in any other languages that the information subscribers are receiving from USAC will affect their Verizon telephone service. When asked about translated forms and letters, representatives from USAC indicated that a directive must come from the FCC and the Bureau.

That is why we request that the Federal Communications Commission and the Bureau work with USAC to revise the recertification guidelines and include multilingual notices informing subscribers of how the recertification process will affect their service, as well as multilingual applications. We look forward to working with you to ensure that the most vulnerable New Yorkers can continue to be connected through the Lifeline Program.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact New York City Council Member Margaret Chin at (212) 587-3150, New York State Assemblywoman Nily Rozic at (718) 820-0241, or New York State Senator Daniel Squadron at (212) 298-5565.

Sincerely,



Margaret S. Chin
New York City Council Member



Nily Rozic
New York State Assemblywoman



Daniel Squadron
New York State Senator



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Gale A. Brewer
Manhattan Borough President



Toby Ann Stavisky
New York State Senator



Peter J. Abbate, Jr.
New York State Assemblyman



Edward C. Braunstein
New York State Assemblyman



Sheldon Silver
New York State Assemblyman



Jimmy Van Bramer
New York City Council Member



Daniel Dromm
New York City Council Member



Peter Koo
New York City Council Member



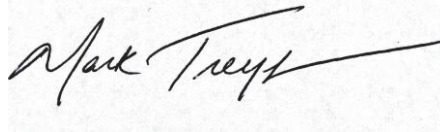
Rory Lancman
New York City Council Member



Carlos Menchaca
New York City Council Member



Rosie Mendez
New York City Council Member



Mark Treyger
New York City Council Member



Paul Vallone
New York City Council Member



Mark Weprin
New York City Council Member



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

May 21, 2015

The Honorable Nydia M. Velazquez
U.S. House of Representatives
2302 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Velazquez:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Lifeline recertification process in New York. I appreciate your interest in this matter and am pleased to provide the enclosed letter on this issue from the Chief of the FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau and our Managing Director.

If you have any additional questions or need any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

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Dear Congresswoman Velazquez:

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The recertification process ensures that Lifeline support goes to qualifying consumers. By requiring providers to recertify that their subscribers remain eligible for the Lifeline benefit, we ensure that scarce resources are targeted to those consumers who need the service. In those cases where a state administrator does not perform recertification, the 2012 *Lifeline Reform Order* permits carriers either to recertify their customers directly or to utilize the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) to recertify customers on their behalf. USAC makes an effort to ensure that consumers understand their recertification obligations and the recertification process. If a provider elects for USAC to recertify its customers on its behalf, USAC sends a letter to each customer, in both English and Spanish, informing the customer of the obligation to recertify that he or she remains eligible for the Lifeline benefit. The letter explains the recertification process, how the consumer may confirm eligibility, and that the consumer has 30 days to complete the recertification, or he or she will no longer receive the Lifeline benefit. Consumers have three methods, in both English and Spanish, to respond to the recertification letter: (1) call a toll-free number and respond through an interactive voice response system; (2) recertify through a USAC-maintained recertification website; or (3) complete, sign, and return a recertification form via U.S. Mail. The consumer will also receive an automated call or text message in both English and Spanish during the 30-day period to encourage him or her to respond to the letter.

Despite USAC's efforts, we understand that some consumers may not have received or understood their recertification notices. This could be due to a variety of reasons, including that the consumers may have moved to a new address, English or Spanish (as you note) may not be accessible languages to them, or because they did not otherwise understand the notice. Consumers may also not recognize that a letter from USAC is related to their Lifeline benefit. Significantly, this is the first year that Verizon has elected to use USAC instead of performing recertification on its own. Therefore, the majority of Verizon's subscribers were unfamiliar with USAC's process, which may differ from Verizon's process from prior years or the process of other providers.

After hearing similar concerns in late March, FCC staff directed USAC to make changes to

the recertification process for the coming year to ensure that consumers receive their recertification notice and better understand both the consequences of not responding to the recertification letter and the process for re-enrolling in Lifeline if they are de-enrolled. If USAC determines that a subscriber was not able to recertify his or her eligibility within the 30-day period, for example, it will send an automated text or call to the subscriber informing the consumer that he or she will no longer receive the Lifeline benefit for failure to complete the recertification process and also explaining how the consumer can re-enroll in the program.

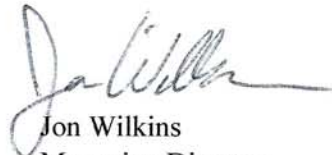
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We appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let us know if we can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,



Julie A. Veach
Chief, Wireline Competition Bureau



Jon Wilkins
Managing Director



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U.S. House of Representatives
2110 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

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Jon Wilkins

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New York City Council Member
Chatham Green 165 Park Row
Suite #11
New York, NY 10038

Dear Councilwoman Chin:

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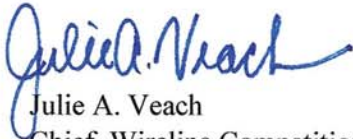
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New York State Assemblywoman
159-16 Union Turnpike
Flushing, NY 11366

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The Honorable Daniel Squadron
New York State Senator
250 Broadway
Suite 2011
New York, NY 10007

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